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ABSTRACT

The suitability of the college setting for adult senior students attending Federal City College during the summer term of 1973 was evaluated, with focus on registration, orientation, class schedule, academic advising, and supportive services. Adult senior students were defined as all undergraduates who were 31 years old or older and who had received 135-179 quarter hours of credit. A questionnaire mailed to 208 students yielded 72 usable responses. Based on the findings seven recommendations are offered: the college should establish a more organized and speedy registration process; the orientation program should better inform adult students about graduation requirements and the availability of facilities; more classes should be offered in the evening; the academic advisor should be more available to the adult student; more information should be provided to the adult student about the counseling center, day care center, media center, and the skills center; a centrally-located and reasonably-priced cafeteria is needed; and a followup study of adult students should be conducted to determine if the college setting improves. Appendices include initial and followup letters to students and a sample questionnaire. A literature review and bibliography are included. (SW)

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AN EVALUATION OF THE SUITABILITY OF THE COLLEGE SETTING FOR ADULT SENIOR STUDENTS ATTENDING FEDERAL CITY COLLEGE DURING THE SUMMER TERM, 1973

by
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A Final Report Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for

AE 559: Directed Study/Practicum

Department of Adult Education
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Washington, D.C.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the suitability of the college setting for adult senior students at Federal City College. Specifically, the study evaluated the following aspects of the college setting: registration, orientation, class schedule, academic advising and supportive services.

Significance of the Problem

Johnstone and Rivera pointed out that more than one in five adults makes a systematic effort each year to acquire new knowledge, information or skills. Furthermore, one half of the adult population engages in further education at some point during their lives.[1]

Every year thousands of adults enroll in university classes in search of a degree. In some cases they are planning part-time graduate study, but many are looking for their first undergraduate degree. By and large, universities have attempted to provide part-time instruction which replicates the regular day-school program. Adult educators are recognizing that this is not appropriate for all, and they have been considering the problems and possibilities of degrees that are designed

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[1]John W.C. Johnstone and Ramon J. Rivera, Volunteers for Learning (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965), p. 1.

especially for adults. An education designed for younger people is not necessarily appropriate for adults.[2]

Adult learning is continually increasing at a rapid rate. It has become important to emphasize programs suitable to the older students. Thus, this evaluation will show whether the college setting at Federal City College is a supporting and enhancing factor to the adult senior students' educational pursuits.

Definition of Term

Adult senior student: For purposes of this study, all undergraduate students who are 31 years of age or over and who have received 135-179 quarter hours credit will be considered as adult senior students.

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[2]A.A. Liveright and Roger DeCrow, New Directions in Degree Programs Especially for Adults (Brookline, Massachusetts: Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults, 1963), p. iii.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

No definitive study has been made directly pertaining to the researcher's problem. However, some related studies have been made.

DeLisle (1965) made a study of academic advising of undergraduate students. Adults who are beginning the college program in the later years or resuming after an interruption have needs which require special knowledge and understanding by the academic advisor. The major complaints of adults is that the personnel to whom they are referred, have no authority to make some of the decisions that need to be made.[3] This refers to the rigidity of course guidelines and the inflexibility of granting exceptions to gear the program to the interests and needs of the adult.

A report of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1971) confirmed the past discrimination toward adult students. It stated that higher education is prejudiced against older students. Too often they are looked upon as inferior. Yet older students can help end the in loco parentis atmosphere of many campuses, add maturity to discussions and make a more balanced community out of the college.[4]

Giles (1971) states that for years, colleges and universities have ignored the older adult student whose work and/or family responsibilities have prevented him from attaining the education he desires and has

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[3]Frances H. DeLisle, A Study of Academic Advising of Undergraduate Students (East Lansing, Michigan: Office of Institutional Research, Michigan State University, May 1965), p. 110.

[4]Carnegie Commission of Higher Education, Less Time, More Options (Hightstown, New Jersey: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1971), p. 19.

the ability to complete. It is estimated that between twenty-five and thirty million older adults are actively involved in continuing education programs although fewer than one-fourth are in college and the university programs.[5] Many adults would definitely enroll in these programs if they were made aware of their existence and the beneficial consequences, and if the programs have an educational format suitable to the needs and life-styles of the adult student.

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[5]Wayne E. Giles, "The Adult Student in Higher Education," Adult Leadership, XXII (June, 1973), p. 50.

III. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

On September 19, 1973, a request was made to the Computer Center at Federal City College to identify all students 31 years of age or over who were enrolled during the 1973 summer term as undergraduates with 135-179 quarter hours of credit. The request included the students' name, age, credit hours earned and home address. When the information was received, 208 students fell into the desired category.

During September, 1973, a questionnaire was developed (Appendix D, page 22) to obtain information on the suitability of the college setting for adult senior students. On October 31, 1973, a letter, questionnaire and self-addressed, stamped envelope were mailed to each students' home address. Of the 208 students who were mailed questionnaires, 4 percent were returned-address unknown, 18 percent replied and 78 percent did not reply.

In the first follow-up, reminder letters were mailed to the 162 nonrespondents on November 23, 1973. Seven percent replied and 93 percent did not reply.

In the second follow-up, another letter, questionnaire and self-addressed, stamped envelope were mailed to the remaining 151 nonrespondents on December 12, 1973. Three percent were returned-address unknown, 27 percent replied and 70 percent did not reply.

Of the total mailing, 7 percent were returned-address unknown. About 43 percent replied, of which 72 or 35 percent were included in the final study. Fifty percent did not reply.

See TABLE 1, page 6.

TABLE 1
REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRES

	Initial Mailing		First Follow-up		Second Follow-up		Total Mailing	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Address unknown	9	4	0	-	5	3	14	7
Replies excluded:								
Didn't attend summer term	2	1	0	-	2	1	4	2
Graduated	2	1	2	1	8	5	12	6
Underage	0	-	1	1	0	-	1	-
Replies included	33	16	8	5	31	21	72	35
Did not reply	162	78	151	93	105	70	105	50
Total	208	100	162	100	151	100	208	100

IV. FINDINGS

All tables were based on 72 replies, unless specified otherwise. There were 41 males (57 percent) and 31 females (43 percent).

Of the total respondents, 57 percent were in the 31-34 age group and 24 percent were in the 35-39 age group (TABLE 2). About 19 percent were 40 or over. In the 31-39 age group, the males were slightly younger than the females, 88 to 71 percent, respectively.

TABLE 2
AGES OF ADULT STUDENT RESPONDENTS

	Male		Female		Total	
Age Group	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
31-34	25	61	16	52	41	57
35-39	11	37	6	19	17	24
40-44	3	7	5	16	8	11
45-49	0	-	1	3	1	1
50 or over	2	5	3	10	5	7
Total	41	100	31	100	72	100

That more adults were full-time students (53 percent), than were part-time (40 percent), was shown in TABLE 3, page 8. Males and females as part-time students amounted to 44 and 35 percent, respectively.

Two-thirds of the adults were satisfied with the registration process (TABLE 4, page 8). One-third indicated that they were not satisfied. Reasons for dissatisfaction were: confusion; information unclear; time-consuming; too disorganized; too many different locations to go to; waiting too long in line.

TABLE 3
FULL AND PART-TIME STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

Status	Male No.	Male %	Female No.	Female %	Total No.	Total %
Full-time	22	54	16	52	38	53
Part-time	18	44	11	35	29	40
No reply	1	2	4	13	5	7
Total	41	100	31	100	72	100

TABLE 4 also indicated that five out of every eight adults were satisfied with the orientation program. One-sixth had no orientation. Another one-sixth were not satisfied. The dissatisfactions were: not fully oriented; unclear about prerequisites; not enough attention to evening students; not specific; people were not very sympathetic.

TABLE 4
SATISFACTION OF RESPONDENTS WITH REGISTRATION & ORIENTATION

Satisfied	Registration Process No.	Registration Process %	Orientation Program No.	Orientation Program %
Yes	49	68	45	62
No	23	32	12	17
No orientation	0	-	13	18
Transfers	0	-	2	3
Total	72	100	72	100

As shown in TABLE 5, page 9, two-thirds of the adults had most of their classes scheduled during the day. One-third had most of their classes in the evening (after 6 p.m.). Four out of every 5 adults did

not prefer their classes to be scheduled at a different time. One-sixth preferred their classes at a different time. The times given were: classes at night (3 hours) instead of 3 days (1 hour); more classes in the evening; each class scheduled both day and night; daytime classes; classes at night for nurses; classes at 6:30 p.m. for easier parking.

TABLE 5
RESPONDENTS' CLASS TIME & PREFERENCE

Time	No.*	%	Prefer different time	No.	%
Day	51	66	Yes	13	18
Evening	25	33	No	57	80
Weekends	0	-	Didn't matter	1	1
Other	0	-	No reply	1	1
No reply	1	1	Total	72	100
Total	77	100			

*5 adults answered twice

Three out of every five adults felt their academic advisor was always or usually available; 8 percent felt their advisor was seldom or never available (TABLE 6, page 10). Seven out of every ten adults felt their advisor always or usually appeared to understand their problems; only 1 percent felt their advisor seldom understood their problems. In planning their academic program, five out of every eight adults felt their advisor was always or usually helpful; 14 percent felt their advisor was seldom or never helpful.

In TABLE 7, page 11, one-fourth of the adults used the Counseling Center. Most of them were satisfied; a few were dissatisfied. The

TABLE 6
RATING OF ACADEMIC ADVISOR BY RESPONDENTS

Rating	Readily Available No.*	%	Appear to Understand Problems No.	%	Helpful in Planning Program No.	%
Always	23	32	22	31	27	37
Usually	19	26	28	39	19	26
Sometimes	22	30	18	25	12	17
Seldom	5	7	1	1	6	8
Never	1	1	0	-	4	6
Not applicable	1	1	1	1	2	3
No reply	2	3	2	3	2	3
Total	73	100	72	100	72	100

*one adult answered twice

reasons for dissatisfaction were no cooperation and no encouragement. Five out of every seven adults did not use the Counseling Center. Most of them were unaware of it or didn't need it. Other reasons given were: inconvenience of traveling; didn't have the time; no serious problems; had special counselors; good counseling from advisors; had followed course outline for major.

One out of every twenty adults used the Day Care Center. All were satisfied except one, who was dissatisfied because of inconvenience in traveling. Eleven out of every twelve adults did not use the Day Care Center. The main reason was that they didn't need it. Some gave reasons such as: I am single; don't have small children; there is a backlog of enrollees.

TABLE 7
USE OF SUPPORTIVE SERVICES BY RESPONDENTS

Used	Counseling Center No.	%	Day Care Center No.	%	Media Center No.	%	Skills Center No.	%
Yes:	18	25	4	5	64	89	27	38
Satisfied yes	16	22	3	4	50	70	19	27
Satisfied no	2	3	1	1	11	15	5	7
No reply	0	-	0	-	3	4	3	4
No:	52	72	66	92	5	7	44	61
Unaware of it	10	14	0	-	0	-	7	10
Don't need it	26	36	53	74	5	7	26	36
Other	12	17	6	8	0	-	9	12
No reply	4	5	7	10	0	-	2	3
No reply--total	2	3	2	3	3	4	1	1
Total	72	100	72	100	72	100	72	100

The Media Center was used by eight out of every nine adults. Most of them were satisfied; some were dissatisfied. Reasons for dissatisfaction were: too noisy; books were unavailable; not enough books. One out of every fourteen adults indicated they did not use the Media Center because they didn't need it.

Three out of every eight adults used the Skills Center. Most of them were satisfied; a few were dissatisfied. The dissatisfactions were: skills were not improved; it didn't assist me in my study; the Center was not always open at the scheduled hours. Three out of every five adults did not use the Skills Center. Most of them were unaware

of it or didn't need it. Other reasons were: don't have the time; had trouble getting to the building; the Center didn't serve its purpose.

TABLE 8 showed that eight out of every nine adults felt that there was a need for a cafeteria. The reasons given were: save time and money; place for relaxation; need for hot meals; food is too expensive elsewhere; no time to seek food elsewhere; enhance socialization with college mates; convenient; it can be a learning experience; cafeteria meals are tastier; students become hungry; it is necessary.

TABLE 8
RESPONDENTS' NEED
FOR A CAFETERIA

Need	No.	%
Yes	64	89
No	8	11
Total	72	100

One out of every nine adults felt that there was no need for a cafeteria. Reasons given were: college is too far apart and spread out; too many buildings in different areas; students use cafeteria in a degrading manner; small snack bar should be sufficient; only certain students find a cafeteria beneficial.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was designed to evaluate the suitability of the college setting for adult senior students attending Federal City College during the summer term, 1973. A computer run was used to determine the sample group. A questionnaire (Appendix D, p. 22) was developed to obtain the desired information from 208 adult senior students. From the initial mailing, 16 percent replied. The first follow-up had a 5 percent reply; the second follow-up had a 21 percent reply. Of the total mailing, 43 percent replied, of which 72 or 35 percent were included in the study.

In the sample group, 57 percent were males and 43 percent were females. The males were slightly younger, 88 percent were 39 or under, as compared to 71 percent for the females. Over half of the adults (53 percent) were full-time students. More males were part-time students (44 percent) than females (35 percent).

Sixty-eight percent of the adults were satisfied with the registration process; 32 percent were dissatisfied. Although 62 percent of the adults were satisfied with the orientation program, 17 percent were dissatisfied.

Of the adults, 66 percent had most of their classes scheduled during the day; 33 percent had most of their classes in the evening (after 6 p.m.). Eighty percent of the adults prefer their classes as scheduled; 18 percent prefer their classes at a different time.

About 58 percent of the adults felt their academic advisor was always or usually available; 8 percent felt their advisor was seldom or never available. Seventy percent of the adults felt their advisor

always or usually appeared to understand their problems; 1 percent felt their advisor seldom understood their problems. In planning their academic program, 63 percent felt their advisor was always or usually helpful; 14 percent felt their advisor was seldom or never helpful.

The Counseling Center was used by 25 percent of the adults. Most of them were satisfied. About 72 percent did not use it because they were unaware of it, did not need it or gave other reasons.

Five percent of the adults used the Day Care Center. All except one were satisfied. About 92 percent did not use it because they mainly did not need it.

Of the adults, 89 percent used the Media Center. A great majority were satisfied. Only 7 percent did not use it because they were unaware of it.

About 38 percent of the adults used the Skills Center. Most of them were satisfied. Sixty-one percent did not use it because they were unaware of it, did not need it or gave other reasons.

A need for a cafeteria was felt by 89 percent of the adults. The most frequent reasons were: to save time and money; convenience; to enhance socialization with college mates.

Eleven percent felt that there was no need for a cafeteria. Main reasons were that the college was too far apart and spread out, and only certain students find a cafeteria beneficial.

The researcher suggests 7 recommendations for implementation:

1. Federal City College should establish a more organized and speedy registration process.
2. The orientation program should be improved so that the adult student will know more about graduation requirements and the availability of facilities.

3. There should be more classes in the evening, preferably one night a week (3 hours).

4. The academic advisor should be more readily available to the adult student, so that he will better understand their problems and be more helpful in planning their academic programs.

5. Adult students should become more aware of the services provided by the Counseling Center, Day Care Center, Media Center and the Skills Center.

6. There should be a centrally-located cafeteria to serve the needs of adult students. It should serve nourishing meals at reasonable prices.

7. A follow-up study of adult students at Federal City College should be made to see if their evaluation of the suitability of the college setting has changed or remained the same.

Earl McGrath, a leader in adult education, said: "No matter how important the preparatory education of the schools may be, the opportunities for continuing adult education, in many instances leading to degrees, must be placed near the top of any priority listing of the nation's requirements in education."[6]

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[6]Earl McGrath, "Research on Higher Education for Adults," Educational Record XLIV (Winter, 1964), p. 95.

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APPENDICES

A. INITIAL LETTER

FEDERAL CITY COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
ADULT EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
1411 K Street, N.W., Suite 402
Washington, D.C. 20005

October 31, 1973

Dear Student:

I am conducting a survey among adult senior students attending Federal City College during the summer quarter, 1973. The purpose is to gather information for evaluating the suitability of the college setting as a supportive and enhancing factor to the adult student's educational pursuits.

As an adult senior student, you are unique since your life-style causes you to bring to the college setting, needs which vary greatly from those of the younger undergraduates.

Adult learning is continually increasing at a rapid rate that it has become important to emphasize programs suitable to the older undergraduates. Therefore, it is essential that you state your needs and express your viewpoints in order that programs might be designed and developed to re-enhance your educational opportunities and chances for success. Your valuable answers and comments will help make this a reality.

Please answer the questionnaire to the best of your ability. Any information you supply will be strictly confidential. Enclosed is a stamped envelope for your convenience. A prompt reply will be appreciated.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Ivan Trotsky

B. FIRST FOLLOW-UP LETTER

FEDERAL CITY COLLEGE
COMMUNITY EDUCATION DIVISION
ADULT EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
1411 K Street, N.W., Suite 402
Washington, D.C. 20005

November 23, 1973

Dear Student:

Did you forget something? I haven't received your questionnaire on the suitability of the college setting at Federal City College. Each questionnaire is important, including yours.

Your help is urgently needed. Will you please respond? In order to complete the research study, it is essential to get as near a 100% response as possible.

If you have already mailed the questionnaire, disregard this reminder. If not, please complete the questionnaire and return it to me as promptly as possible.

Thank you for your help. It is very greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Ivan Trotsky

C. SECOND FOLLOW-UP LETTER

FEDERAL CITY COLLEGE
COMMUNITY EDUCATION DIVISION
ADULT EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
1411 K STREET, N.W. SUITE 402
Washington, D.C. 20005

December 12, 1973

Dear Student:

I need your help in evaluating the suitability of the college setting at Federal City College. Only you as an adult senior student can provide this information.

Some time ago, a letter and questionnaire were mailed to you with a stamped envelope. In case you have misplaced it, an additional questionnaire and stamped envelope are enclosed for your convenience.

The questionnaire will take only a short time to answer. It is essential that I receive a response from a large number of adult senior students like yourself. Let me assure you that the information you supply will be strictly confidential.

If you have already mailed the questionnaire, disregard this reminder. If not, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me as promptly as possible.

Thank you for your help. It is very greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Ivan Trotsky

D. SUITABILITY OF THE COLLEGE SETTING

Please check (✓) the appropriate answer to the following question. If any question brings a different answer than those given, please write in that answer. Your comments are important.

1. Sex _____male _____female.

2. Age Group
   _____31-34 _____45-49
   _____35-39 _____50 or over

3. Were you attending Federal City College during the summer quarter.
   _____full-time (12 or more quarter hours)
   _____part-time (11 or less quarter hours).

4. Are you satisfied with the registration process at Federal City College?
   _____yes _____no.

4a. If no, why not?_____

_____

5. Were you satisfied with the orientation program during your freshman year?
   _____yes _____no.

5a. If no, why not?_____

_____

6. When was most of your classes scheduled?
   _____during the day
   _____evenings (after 6.00 p.m.)
   _____weekends
   _____others (specify)_____

7. Would you prefer that your classes be scheduled at a different time?
   _____yes _____no.

7a. If yes, specify when and why?_____

_____

8. Is your academic advisor readily available?
   _____always
   _____usually
   _____sometimes
   _____seldom
   _____never

9. Does your academic advisor appear to understand your problems?

_____always
_____usually
_____sometimes
_____seldom
_____never.

10. How helpful was your adacemic advisor to you in planning your academic program?

_____always
_____usually
_____sometimes
_____seldom
_____never.

11. Have you used the college Counseling Centers?

_____yes _____no.

11a. If yes, were you satisfied?

_____yes
_____no (If no, why were you dissatisfied?)_____

_____

11 b. If no, why didn't you use it?

_____unaware of it
_____don't need it
_____other (specify)_____

_____

12. Have you used the Day Care Center?

_____yes _____no.

12 a. If yes, were you satisfied?

_____yes
_____no (If no, why were you dissatisfied?)_____

_____

12 b. If no, why didn't you use it?

_____unaware of it
_____don't need it
_____other (specify)_____

_____

13. Have you used the Media Center?
_____yes _____no.

13 a. If yes, were you satisfied?
_____yes
_____no (If no, why were you dissatisfied?)_____

_____

13 b. If no, why didn't you use it?
_____unaware of it
_____don't need it
_____other (specify)_____

_____

14. Have you used the Skills Center?
_____yes _____no.

14 a. If yes, were you satisfied?
_____yes
_____no (If no, why were you dissatisfied?)_____

_____

14 b. If no, why didn't you use it?
_____unaware of it
_____don't need it
_____other (specify)_____

_____

15. Do you feel there is a need for a cafeteria?
_____yes _____no.

15 a. If yes, why?_____

_____

_____

15. B. If no, why not?_____

_____

_____